

Diverse tales on show

Chaucer gets rap version

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BOOKS EDITOR

BABA Brinkman has set himself the difficult task of bringing together the worlds of rap music and 14th-century literature.

And he pulls it off beautifully, as audiences will discover this week when the young artist performs *The Rap Canterbury Tales* as part of the Brisbane Writers Festival, which opens on Wednesday.

Since transforming his undergraduate thesis comparing rap freestyle battles to Chaucer's storytelling competition in *The Canterbury Tales* into a one-man stage show in 2003, Brinkman has been in huge demand around the world.

Fresh from an award-winning season at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Brinkman said he was

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continuously surprised about how successful his show has become.

"Right from the time when I first performed it for my family, nearly everyone has said how great it is," Brinkman said after flying into Brisbane at the weekend.

"The only criticism I've had is from people who haven't seen it."

Brinkman, 28, admitted that he was not what people expect of a rap artist, being a white, middle-class Canadian.

"I'm a marginalised rapper," he joked. "I'm certainly not in the league of Kanye West or 50 Cent, but I'm accepted on the fringes and it's those people I identify with anyway."

Brinkman said his audience was usually evenly divided between retired baby boomers with fond memories of studying Chaucer at school and younger people "who just want to see something cool".

"Some come with a love for Chaucer, some for rap, each of them get different things from the performance," he said.

Brinkman is just one of hundreds of local, interstate and international authors flooding into town this week for the 11th annual Brisbane Writers Festival.

Some are well known, others are just starting to build a profile.

Among the celebrities are *Tales*

of the City author Armistead Maupin, mystery writer Louise Penny, biographer Victoria Glendinning and best-seller sci-fi writer Kevin J. Anderson.

Among those who will become better known through the festival are Abdel Bari Atwan, the controversial editor-in-chief of Al-Quds Al Arabi, a London-based daily newspaper, who has written extensively on the Middle East, and interviewed Osama bin Laden in Tora Bora, Afghanistan, in 1996.

Along with the discussion panels, interviews and readings by authors and writers, BWF 2007 also will feature masterclasses for aspiring writers, led by the likes of Kevin J. Anderson and Michael Collins.

For more details log on to www.news.com.au/couriermail and follow the links.



CLASSIC twist ... Baba Brinkman performing.
Picture: Sarah Marshall